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**PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING AND THE
CLERGYMAN COUNSELOR**

William Alexander Rennie

PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING AND THE CLEROYMAN COUNSELOR

A Thesis

presented in

partial fulfilment

of the requirement for

the degree of

Master of Theology
(Scientiae Theologicae Magister)
by

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CHAPTER I

The Clergy in the Counseling Role

We live in the midst of a fast moving society, one in which we often find ourselves puzzled and concerned. It appears as though we have built structures which threaten to control us by their very growth or to crush us as they tumble about our ears. Technological developments are running beyond the fondest hopes of yesterday. Fortunately, in the midst of the techniques of our day, of the speed with which we live and have things happen, we have not forgotten the individual. In fact, in our own cultural environment, it may appear that the individual has been placed upon a high throne. The success of the individual is held out as an example to other individuals, and the measure of his success is usually in terms of money and popularity. However, at times, as his society has become concerned about some phase of endeavor, man and his success has been measured by the capacity of the individual to fit into that particular expression of culture. For example, in our day there is much concern in regard to the institution of marriage, as to whether the rising divorce rate is an evidence of the failure of marriage to meet the changing conditions of our age, or if it is a measure of the failure of today's individual to adjust to the demands of marriage.

The Family

"Both the individual and society, we recognize today, are important. But in emphasizing first the one and then the other we seemed to have forgotten the family. The family, we at last understand, is the social organism into which the individual is born and the social institution out of which the children of the world of tomorrow must come. The family is not only basic to the social order, it is central to all social development."¹

In the statement above, Goldstein implies that the neglect of the family as a factor in civilization and culture is at least, for the moment, a thing of the past. It would appear that in the years since Goldstein's writing, a great deal of interest has been centered in the family, its success, its failure.

In pursuing an interest in the family, one of the first things that so often is brought to our attention is the thought that the family is in a new stage of development. Constant reference is made to the new family organization, or to the fundamental changes that are in process within the structure of the family.

Goldstein has pointed to some of the changes which he considers as taking place: "The crumbling of the old foundations, the power of the parent, the sacrament of religion, and

¹Sidney E. Goldstein, Marriage and Family Counseling (New York: McGraw Hill, 1945), p. 3.

even the contract of the State, and the laying of new foundations derived from the field of science . . . constitute a change of historical importance."²

He speaks of "the emergence of the democratic type" of family, as does Randolph Ray in his book, Marriage is a Serious Business.³

This does not imply that there has been a universal change in the family wherever the family appears in the varying cultures of this world. For wherever we find man, even in primitive conditions, we find some form of the family; and in that respect, the family provides a "universal solution to the two universal needs of a control of the sexual instinct and the rearing of children."⁴ But rather, the change in the structure of the family has been noted on the American scene; and it is rather natural that such a change, in such a cultural setting, should move toward more democratic form.

It should not be surprising to find that changes in the functions of the family have occurred along with the structural changes. In fact, Joseph Kirk Folsom indicates that such is true. He first considers the total functions of the family institution as follows: reproduction of population, care and training of children, economic production or material

²Ibid., p. 9.

³New York: McGraw Hill, 1944.

⁴Florence Kluckhohn, "The American Family and the Feminine Role," in Human Relations, Vol. I, ed. by Hugh Cabot and Joseph A. Kahl (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 257.

service and supply, education and training of older children and adolescents, recreational function, social control of discipline, emotional satisfactions, intimate personal relations. He then considers that part of the functions have left the home, chiefly in the areas of economic, education, recreation, and social control, but the areas left undisturbed may be more important.⁵

Some writers tend to agree with Folsom in his feeling that the pruning of the family functions may leave a healthier family life with functions more suited to the nature of the changing structure. Note the opinion of Burgess and Cottrell.

The continuing loss of functions by the family "may mean that the family today . . . is specializing in its intrinsic functions of providing persons with the satisfactions of intimate personal relationships."⁶

The changes, to date, have not eliminated problem areas of family life. The rising divorce rate of the past few decades represents but one important area of concern in regard to the family. It is recognized that many vital problems are hidden by the perpetuation of marriages that have long since ceased to be real family relationships in the best sense of the word. Where the unity of families has been meaningless, society

⁵Joseph Kirk Folsom, ed., "Youth and the Future Family Life." Plan for Marriage (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938), p. 256.

⁶Ernest W. Burgess and Leonard S. Cottrell, Jr., Predicting Success or Failure in Marriage (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1939), p. 6.

has often paid the price of delinquency and crime.

The scope of these problems has been so great and the impact upon society so deep that a great deal of concern has been expressed as to the possibility of the total collapse of our family structure. There are those who would take steps to assist the family in meeting the problems which they face, and joining with them are many who are interested in preparing the younger generation to face with more adequacy the problems which marriage will bring.

Goldstein sees that a program to preserve and safeguard the family is necessary, that it must proceed in the areas of education, of service, and of legislation, and that it must do three things:

1. Make men and women acquainted with the age-long experience of the race, that is, with the laws, the standards, the ideals that have developed out of the experience of the various racial, religious and national groups in the matter of marriage and family life.

2. It must instruct men and women in accordance with the studies now being made in the social science laboratories, studies that reveal not only the weaknesses of old foundations, but the content and the character of the new foundations on which the family must rest hereafter.

3. It must also assure men and women counsel and guidance by experts, who because of training, experience and personality are competent to serve as counselors both before and after marriage.⁷

It is at this point that the specific interest of this paper rests. We are interested in the family as an institu-

⁷Goldstein, Marriage and Family Counseling, p. 26.

tion, but particularly in the area of preparation for marriage. The family is one of those circular entities wherein each part is securely resting in other areas of itself. An interest in the preparation for marriage brings us squarely into the structure of family itself as the source of future families, as a highly potent influence in the possibilities of adjustment or maladjustment within the new family. The problems of the family become the problems which young people face as they plan their own venture into marriage. It might be wise therefore, in the following pages to consider, among other things, the troubles seemingly most prevalent in marital situations and to see if these sources of potential difficulty are present in pre-marital experience, if young people are aware of these troubled areas, and if it appears as though the needs of these young people are likely to be met in pre-marital counseling.

Where People Take Their Troubles.

Today, there are many sources of counsel for people who are serious in their plans to face marriage better prepared than was the generation before them, or many of their contemporaries who will plunge into the married state on the crest of a romantic thrill.

We are also interested in the counselor. Our general interest, in this area, is in who the counselors are, what their functions, methods, qualifications. We shall view counselors in general before confining our interest to the

counselor in the area of preparation for marriage. These matters must wait for development in later pages while the ultimate interest in the counselor is made more clear.

Not all "counselors" share in the same approach to the problem areas of people. We are all aware of the counselors who work in the fields of psychology and of psychiatry, and some people tend to think of these groups as the real professional counselors. Their training entitles them to such high regard. But there are many other men and women who have trained to a degree in social studies, medicine, and other professions who have a perfect right, ability, and interest to engage in the work of counseling with the troubled individual.

There are also many others who are on the periphery of the training expected of counselors, as well as those quite outside the pale who set themselves up with confidence in the business of selling advice or showmanship.

In her highly readable book,⁸ Mrs. Steiner has given us a good look into the inner workings of many of these sources for aid. From the cover sheet of her book we learn that:

Mrs. Steiner and her assistant, Mrs. Barrison, visited an incredible segment of the contemporary scene: radio 'courts' and 'advisors'; newspaper columnists who hand out dicta on every sort of domestic difficulty; astrologers who know your star is right around the corner; mediums who assuage grief with catcalls from the departed; 'social clubs' which cater to more earthly loneliness; marriage brokers who will provide you with

⁸Lee R. Steiner, Where Do People Take Their Troubles? (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1945).

a mate at the drop of a dollar bill; 'Personnel Counselors' who offer to find you or Junior a job--after an expensive training course; Personal Columns, some of them in leading magazines, which offer companionship to the more tweedy lonely hearts; fortune-tellers who can predict success ahead from tea leaves or tarot cards; practitioners who pervert man's ancient solace, religion, into commercial enterprise.

People will continue to have troubles beyond their capacity to handle alone. They will need help in addition to that which can be gained from family or friend. To get this help they will turn to some source of help, whether it is a professionally qualified source or not. The question of setting up minimum standards for persons engaged in counseling practice is fraught with danger. It may well be that the best that society can do is to provide an ever increasing number of adequately trained experts in the general field of human relations.

One of the great sources of human comfort has been the church and its representatives, the clergy. Mrs. Steiner makes a brief, but honest appraisal of the clergy in counseling: "Through endless ages of human history, the clergy has been regarded as the group peculiarly suited to counseling with people about their personal problems. Many of them are very well suited for this function. Others are not at all suited."⁹

There are several reasons why the clergy is a peculiarly good source of aid for us to consider in the matter of pre-

⁹Ibid., p. 130.

marital counseling. First, the clergy are one of the most available of the professional classes. Like the doctor, the minister, priest, and rabbi has made himself available to communities ranging in size from our largest cities to our smallest hamlet. There are very few of our people who live in areas so remote that they are not served by some church and its clergy. In the second place, the clergy represents a well-established, highly respected organization in which the trust of the individual is most easily placed. This is an essential factor in any effective counseling. Thirdly, the clergyman has enjoyed a long term relationship with many families, usually those families within his parish. In some instances the clergyman has baptized the children in the family, attended the family in times of illness, served in the event of death, expressed the comfort of religion and the service of burial. Here, then, is a relationship built upon long service and confidence, knowledge and understanding of each other which will play its vital part in any counseling situation.

Finally, there is another reason why the clergy is suited in the matter of counseling in the preparation for marriage. This is a very practical matter. It is the cultural norm for the ceremony of marriage to be performed by a member of the clergy, if feasible. When the couple comes to the minister, priest, or rabbi to plan for the ceremony, a type of relationship is thus formed which permits the clergyman to assume the

role of advisor or counselor as the situation may warrant. Such a relationship is not forced, but is a natural outgrowth of the situation.

The field of counseling in marriage, including the pre-marital aspect, represents a vast area of need. The clergy should be well aware of the needs expressed by people everywhere, and also of their own responsibility in the matter. The pastor needs skills to apply to this area of need; and, if he does not have these skills as the result of his natural abilities or as the result of his training, it would seem that he would feel it his responsibility to develop them. The clergy of our country must be prepared to meet the needs of the young people as they prepare for marriage, otherwise in many instances, the needs will not be met.

In placing our emphasis upon the sacred source of help in counseling of this nature, we must not ignore the varied array of secular and, often times, professional resources which are available. In fact, both sources of aid are widely needed, not only to take care of vast numbers of people who need help and who request assistance, but also to meet the need of individual preference in the matter. There are many people who prefer to go to a secular source for their help, because they do not belong to any parish or may not have any interest in religious matters. Also there are those who have had a close relationship with their religious counselor and would therefore prefer to go to a professional counselor if a

rather personal matter is involved in their marital problem. Both sources are needed to meet the varied needs of our people.

Duvall expresses a point of view in brief form. "The need of people for counseling in family relations are far greater than our psychiatrists and other professional counselors can meet. Furthermore, many people need a type of counseling which the psychiatrist is not trained to give. In the meeting of such needs the properly trained minister can make a conspicuous and increasingly effective contribution."¹⁰

We shall then be concerned with the clergy in the role of pre-marital counseling. We shall stress the needs involved in the counseling situation, the needs of the counselor as well as the client's needs. We shall note the awareness of the counselor and the client in the area of high potency troubles of family living. We shall be interested in seeing if there is a correlation of awareness between the two groups. Also we shall be concerned to see if the needs of client and counselor are met in the counseling process.

The first task at hand, then, is to study the general picture of the counselor, his preparation and resources, the place which our counselor-clergy fills, and the general problems of the family as it struggles for survival. The next few pages will be concerned with these factors.

CHAPTER II

The Counselor and General Concerns in Marital and Pre-Marital Areas

The Counselor

Brief mention has been made previously in regard to the setting up of standards for counselors. Recognized dangers are involved in such a procedure, such as the setting of too high a set of standards with the result that the counselors would become an elite group with a tendency to become narrow, specialized in scope, and expensive. One of the purposes of Mrs. Steiner's study¹ was to find out where the people, who were not poor, took their troubles. We understand her interest in such a matter, for all too common is the idea of charity which is attached to many social service centers. If an elaborate set of standards became the norm for counselors, one might well wonder where then the average man would take his troubles, if not still to the same semi-trained and semi-quack counselors against whom Mrs. Steiner is engaged in her fight.

If, on the other hand, the standards for the counselor were set too low and general, the conditions we find today would still persist: no control over the "counselor," high

¹Lee R. Steiner, Where do People Take Their Troubles? (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1945).

rates for little value received, and all the preparation a counselor would need would be a shingle to hang out and a vague desire to help people or a stronger desire to benefit oneself financially.

Some invaluable guideposts as to the possible requirements for counselors were suggested by Emily Hartshorne Mudd in 1947. The high standard which they presuppose makes it still a helpful list for evaluative purposes.

1. Every counsellor should have as a background a minimum of a graduate degree in some related field. (This may be social work, psychology, medicine, etc.)

2. The counsellor must have had several years of paid job experience working with people.

3. The personal experience of marriage and parenthood is a decided asset.

4. An attitude of interest, warmth, kindness toward people regardless of race, creed, color or economic level is essential.

5. The counsellor in marital or pre-marital situations, to be helpful and constructive, should have, in addition to the usual requirements of a good counsellor, expert knowledge of the physiology of human sex behavior. In addition, the worker should have a non-moralistic attitude of acceptance of individual variation, deviation and need in this area, and the ability to discuss sexual matters with objectivity as well as understanding, to supplement information where needed, as well as to correct erroneous information, especially where such misinformation is contributing to anxiety and guilt.²

Because of the complexity of counseling situations and

¹From the mimeographed manuscript, "Marriage Education and Counselling Program," Planned Parenthood Federation of America Inc., New York, 1947, pp. 5-6; as quoted by John F. Cuber, Marriage and Counselling Practice (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1948), p. 123.

because there are two individuals involved, one of whom is the counselor with his own ideas of the function of a counseling situation, and the other is the client who is usually limited in his view by the blinding force of his problem, there is no single clear-cut method of procedure which is followed by all counselors. Some feel that their function is to find out what the problem is and then to solve the problem for the client. Other counselors feel that their function is to be a mirror or sounding board for the client, occasionally restating the problem in the light of any progress made in the interview, but leaving the main part of solving the problem up to the client himself. A third general group of counselors follows a combination of these more extreme methods, guiding, where they feel guidance necessary, and permitting the client to come to his own decision if he is able.

However, there are certain general features that are commonly accepted in most counseling techniques. The counselor stands in a professional relationship to his client. He is not a new friend in the guise of a social worker. A mutual friendship is not the object of the meeting, rather it is the common function of the two persons who are associated for a time to help one of them look objectively at himself to see clearly the difficulties which he faces, both internally and in the area of the outer problem situation. Often the counselor early becomes aware of the fact that the client has made his own diagnosis of the problem and that he is convinced

that that is the extent of the difficulty. Furthermore, the client usually is not willing to accept the responsibility for his own problem. The course of the counselor is clear in that he must lead the client into an awareness of his own responsibility and to clear the ground to find if the admitted diagnosis is all that must be considered, or if it might be a cover up for the real reason for the client coming to the counselor.

Another general practice recognized by counselors is that of referral. It is quite probable that a counselor will not damage the relationship with the client if he is ready to admit that there are some things he does not know. If the entire problem, or areas of it, lie outside the realm of the counselor, it is an acceptable and wise procedure for the counselor to refer his client to an expert in the field in question. The counselor should first of all anticipate the possibility of such a move arising, and therefore have pre-arranged agreements with other counselors or specialists for such transfers. Secondly, there should be no question as to the competence of the professional men to whom the referrals are made. For example, where a counselor meets a medical problem which he is not capable enough to handle, he should assure the successful continuing of the help to the client by referral to a well trained, highly regarded doctor, particularly a specialist in the area of medicine involved in the problem.

There are also certain danger areas in counseling. In a later chapter some of these factors will be taken into consideration at greater length, but, at this time, it might be wise to at least point them out.

There are things which the counselor should not do, although the temptation might be great. Cuber³ suggests that the counselor should beware of issuing directives. It would be easy to give the client a set of directives like a doctor gives a prescription; but the chances are that the client would be in no mood to follow the directions. Human as he is, the counselor should avoid fixing the blame. He may not be right, and even if he were, chances are the fixing of the blame might not assist in finding an answer to the perplexity. The counselor should avoid the taking of sides. This can become nearly disastrous in any situation as the alienation of one of the members of the problem reduces the possibility of the counselor actually being of much value. This becomes particularly true in counseling in a marital situation where the preservation of the relationship with both members of the marriage is so vital.

In other words, "The counselor is not a mere passive mirror who lets the person's feelings bounce off him. He will be warm and friendly, a real person. But he will not

³John F. Cuber, Marriage Counseling Practice, pp. 55 ff.

. . . become enmeshed in the problem itself."⁴

Much has been said about the ethical considerations of the counselor, with particular emphasis upon the necessity of maintaining the strictest confidence. The information which comes to him in his ministry to the client does not become public property. Probably less has been said about the wisdom of the counselor limiting his activity to those things he can and should do.

We have considered some of the accepted practices of counseling as well as the general methods of procedure and some of the danger areas which are most commonly observed. It might be well to look briefly at the functions of counseling.

Among the many suggested classifications of counseling functions that one finds written in texts, manuals, and studies of the subject, the following has the advantage of simplicity combined with a clear understanding of the meaning of the counseling situation. It is found in Cuber's book⁵ and is quoted almost in its entirety.

1. Listening . . . Even if no other assistance is rendered the client except that of sympathetic listening, a definite service may be performed.

2. Giving the client information which he will be able to use directly or indirectly in the solution of his difficulty is a second function which

⁴Seward Hiltner, Self Understanding (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 203.

⁵John F. Cuber, Marriage and Counseling Practice, p. 54.

the counselor may provide. Frequently the client needs little more than some facts or some interpretation of facts in order to effect a satisfactory readjustment himself.

3. Assisting the client to make important decisions pertaining to some aspect or aspects of his marriage is sometimes a distinct need.

4. In other cases the client needs someone to interpret, to help him understand or to accept the frustrating occurrences which impinge sometimes very severely upon his happiness

5. To some extent the counselor may be able to assist the client, through insight or other devices, to modify his overt behavior.

The counselor should have certain personal characteristics that will assist him in meeting people with a pleasant demeanor and a warm showing of interest in them. He should be aware of the unusual in his clients, the neurotic as well as the victim of psychosis. A sense of humor is a valuable asset for the counselor. He should be keen to note the symptoms of ignorance in his client; he should be able to evaluate his own sex life. He should have an understanding of the self.

"Another essential element in the personality make-up of the therapist (counselor) is a sound understanding of himself, of his outstanding emotional patterns, and of his own limitations and shortcomings. Unless there is this considerable degree of insight, he will not be able to recognize the situations in which he is likely to be warped and biased by his own prejudices and emotions. He will not be able to understand why there are certain types of clients or types of prob-

lems, which he is unable to treat satisfactorily. Thoroughly to understand and be objective in regard to the problems, the therapist must have some insight into his own personality."⁶

The Clergyman in Counseling

We have been confining our thinking in the last few pages to a consideration of counselors in general. As our chief interest in the counselor will be with the religious counselor, we now look at him in closer perspective. It would be unfair to exempt him entirely from the general classifications of the preceeding sections, and such we do not have to do. For there are clergy in every community who are increasingly better prepared to meet the strict requirements of counseling. Many churches require extensive education before ordination. Some churches supervise directly or closely the training which their candidates receive. The general trend is toward training that will continually better fit them to serve their people.

Even so, the training which the clergy receive is not directed at the level of the medical practitioner in the field of medicine, nor toward the professional qualifications of the psychologist nor the psychiatrist. It would not be possible in the educational years allotted to the preparation of the clergy for them to accomplish such an ambitious goal.

⁶Carl R. Rogers, The Clinical Treatment of the Problem Child (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1939), p. 282.

But we have already noted that the clergyman has a peculiar role in marriage counseling.

Duvall has stated that "more thoughtful clergy are concerned for they know that they are not psychiatrists or professionally trained counselors."⁷ He qualifies this statement somewhat as he continues. "Many cases call for only limited adjustments which do not require a complete analysis and reordering of the total personality. These limited adjustments the ordinary minister can be trained to make with reasonable safety and effectiveness."

Duvall lists a number of things which in his opinion the minister can do effectively:

1. He can refer people to proper sources for professional assistance.
2. He can help people develop sound policies of family relationships.
3. He can be an understanding friend, skilled in bringing psychological release.
4. He can help others solve their own problems.
5. He can relieve guilt feelings.
6. He can give understanding interpretation.
7. He can help individuals make limited adjustment.
8. He can bring moral and religious ideals to bear upon problems of family adjustment.

⁷S. M. Duvall, "The Minister as Marriage Counselor," Marriage and Family Living, IX (1947), pp. 63 ff.

Here, then, would appear to be adequate ways in which the clergy can assist their people and others who come to them in the preparation for marriage. Wherever the clergyman feels that there is a conflict between his ideas and the limiting factors of his role as counselor, he must resolve those differences.

C. A. Wise points to one of these areas where this type of conflict is frequently found. "Some ministers will immediately feel a conflict between the suggestion that the counseling relationship be one of freedom and their feeling that it is part of their task to lead people into certain kinds of experience or to bring them to certain kinds of solutions to their problems. This conflict needs to be faced and resolved. A pastor who feels a need to be authoritative in his relationships will not find the approach."⁸

There are other matters which the pastor may find presenting difficulties in his marital and pre-marital counseling. He may approach the problem areas with a direct or indirect method as does the general counselor, but often he will place such a method in the more familiar guise of his daily practice. He may, in the case of the pre-marital clients, present them with a series of questions designed to ferret out the real problems, assuming that some such must exist. It is true that many couples will resent this method and it might be

⁸Carroll A. Wise, Pastoral Counseling, Its Theory and Practice (New York: Harper, 1951), p. 52.

that such an emotional situation is created that no real counseling is possible.

Or the pastor may present a lecture or sermon which he has developed over the years to fit what he sees as the needs in pre-marital counseling situations. In the strict sense this is not counseling, but it does help to crystalize the thinking for the not so well prepared. However, the ideas are those of the pastor and do not necessarily become those of the clients.

Or the pastor may try to accept the clients as they see themselves in relation to him. He can offer to discuss any problems they desire, even within the areas of sex, if they wish.

Ultimately, it is not the job of the pastor to decide whether or not the couple marries--that is up to the couple. The pastor does have an added problem here which the general or professional counselor in pre-marital counseling does not have to face. He must decide whether he shall perform the wedding ceremony or not. If he feels that the couple has not made adequate preparation for marriage, that they are too young, or if he finds that their parents do not know or, if they do know, do not approve of the wedding, then his only forms of protest are (1) to try to talk them out of their ill-advised action, or (2) to refuse to perform the ceremony. Either way he may fail in his attempt to prevent the marriage as well as destroying a relationship which may later have

given him an opportunity to help the couple in making adjustments necessary in their married life.

Looking at the Family

It is a well known fact that young men and women spend much time, money, and effort in preparation for their life work. They are the first ones to admit their need for such a strict and thorough preparation. To be without such today is expressing the willingness to accept a second-rate job or work requiring little skill. In regard to preparation for marriage, however, the case does not have as much support. Older people, our grandparents, for example, are likely to point out the fact that in their day they did not have to hear lectures or read books and prepare thusly for family life. Younger people are apt to lean too heavily upon their faith in "love" to provide their answers for them, or to point to the fact that they lived in a family all their lives and thus should be prepared to meet all the trials of marriage and family life.

Actually, many differences have occurred in the matter of family living which has changed this situation and has created many areas of concern which did not adversely affect our grandparents. Chances are that our grandparents did prepare for marriage by the very closeness with which the family lived. The girls of that day were expected to be the future homemakers. That was their primary function, and it was for that which they were trained. The girl learned "how to buy,

cook, serve food, clean and manage a house, to care for children and others in the family who became ill."⁹ Both boys and girls of that earlier day became familiar with the problems of family life as they arose in the every day relationships. They learned the art of accomodation and adjustment and, with the larger families of that day, must have learned a great deal about the rights of others in the give and take of daily work and play.

Goldstein has pointed out in his book¹⁰ that in our day we do not live at home but, rather, are tied down to jobs, usually outside the home; that we continue in school many years longer as an average, and that the last few of these years are often spent away from home entirely; that much of our entertainment now centers outside the home rather than in the parlor; that women prepare for a career in fields outside of marriage and the home; that as a rule very few families today make a practice of discussing problems that do arise, parents feeling it is their duty to spare the child this element of concern and children not turning to parents simply because this type of relationship has never been nurtured. Goldstein further points out that which we all know very well, that life in our time has become exceedingly more complicated, with the range of our social contacts extended far beyond the former limits of the horizon or a day's journey

⁹Sidney E. Goldstein, Marriage and Family Counseling, p.50.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 51 ff.

by wagon.

And with this more complicated world has come the more complicated role of a man and woman in marriage. In "Emotional Maturity and the Approach to Marriage,"¹¹ J. Howard Howson takes cognizance of this as follows:

Marriage is not . . . primarily a physical adjustment (It) is . . . the incorporation of two . . . personalities into a partnership for the adventure of life It is a business and legal entity with financial responsibilities which both must share. It is a social unit, with personal relations reaching out into the community. . . . It is an educational institution with responsibility for an educational program for the child from the moment it is born.

As such a complicated entity the family makes its impress upon society round about. It would be false to say that society in turn did not make a profound impression on the family or was not at least partly aware of the stake which society has in the family; yet it must be realized that the permanence of the family today is less influenced by the community than it ever has been. Custom and social pressure no longer exert the influence to guarantee the permanence of marriage. As society has more broadly recognized grounds suitable for the dissolving of marriage and has removed the stigma formerly attached to divorce, it has progressively made marriage more and more a matter of personal relationship between husband and wife.

¹¹From Plan for Marriage, ed. by Joseph Kirk Folsom (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938), p. 61.

If such is true, that marriage has become a personal rather than a social relation, then it would seem that the getting along in marriage or the failures of marriage are to be defined in terms of personality adjustments.

English and Pearson feel that this whole area of adjustment needs the benefit of study. "We believe that the whole question of marriage needs closer scrutiny and that divorce and separation are symptoms of personality disturbance in our social life and, therefore, that we need to investigate why people cannot live together in marriage" ¹²

Our purpose is not to investigate why people cannot live together in marriage but, rather, to look closely at some of those problems which apparently are at the root of maladjustment in many marriages. Then we shall proceed to look at the areas of preparation for marriage, first from the viewpoint of the future husbands and wives and then from the side of the counselor, to see if the problems that exist in marriage are being considered in the pre-marital scene as a possible way to improve adjustment in marriage.

These factors are considered as being primarily in the area of the needs of the client. We shall then attempt to determine if there are needs expressed by the counselor, what they might be, and how they express themselves in the counseling experience with couples preparing for marriage.

¹²O. Spurgeon English and Gerald H. J. Pearson, Emotional Problems of Living (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1945), p. 316.

General Areas of Concern

There are several general areas of concern in regard to marriage. One of these is in the changes within the behavior characteristics of the members of the family group. Much has been written about the change of the children. It appears as though elements of rebellion have been noted in the youngsters, which may be an expression of the growing independence which is theirs within the new structure of the family. Connected with this, certainly, is the revolution of women. They have demanded and, in many respects gained, an equality with men which they have not enjoyed so completely before. Added to their political and social rights is a growing list of economic rights and rights of personal freedom. Woman has demanded the right to train for a career and to work at a job, to put aside for the time the bringing of children into the world so that she might continue her economic interests. Some social thinkers feel also that they have noted a growing restlessness in men. This may be partly a result of the unsettled condition of the world, the advent of wars that take many men away from home and give them large shares in tasks that are more or less directly connected with the survival of the group. With this kind of a norm, man does find it hard to settle into a prosaic kind of existence where his leadership role is being constantly more and more threatened.

This brings us face to face with a usually glib assertion by those who know that marriage is a fifty-fifty matter. Actually some studies in the realm of domination in marriage prove the popular adage to be quite correct.

"The Institute's (American Institute of Family Relations) study of thousands of marriages of more than five years duration in the normal, educated part of the population reveals the following:

Of the wife dominated marriages, 47% are happy.

Of the husband dominated marriages, 61% are happy.

Of the fifty-fifty marriages, 87% are happy."¹³

Some marriage counselors consider that the solution for many of the troubles that occur in marriage is to make it more difficult to marry, or at least to rule out the "easy methods" of marriage, which make it possible for young people to marry on the spur of the moment, without considering many important things in the light of day.

A well known clergyman, who has married many thousands of couples, has this to say: "Because easy marriage seems to me to be the worst foundation for married life, I try as far as possible, to learn something about the young people I am marrying: to find out how long they have known one another, how well they know one another; to discover whether or not they are approaching marriage as an experiment or, after ear-

¹³Paul Popenoe, Marriage Before and After (New York: Wilfred Funk, Inc., 1943), p. 7.

nest thought, with the determination of making a success of it; to see whether or not the parents, if the couple is young, approve and have given their consents; to make sure that they are free to marry."¹⁴

There is a very important area of concern in the choosing of suitable mates. In fact, one might well state that this is the crux of the matter, for if choices were more wisely made, it is assumed that happier marriages would result. But this would also assume a greater degree of emotional maturity than most of us have. Many persons are limited in their search and choice of a mate by their own need of a substitute parent who showered affection upon them when they were still children physically. It takes a great deal of emotional maturity and objectiveness to recognize this type of need, or any other needs, which appear to play a part in the choice of a mate.

Mary Shattuck Fisher in "Romance and Realism in Love and Marriage" states that "It is quite natural . . . to prefer not to examine too critically the particular combination of experiences, inner needs, protests, parental pressures, etc., which have gone into any particular choice. Getting engaged and wanting to get engaged are primarily emotional experiences."¹⁵

¹⁴Randolph Ray, Marriage is a Serious Business (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., Inc., 1944), p. 16.

¹⁵In Plan for Marriage, ed. by J. K. Folsom, p. 4.

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Howson¹⁶ suggests that some very vital areas of concern in marriage might be reduced as potential threats, if in the process of choosing a mate, the role of friendship would be given a larger part. He feels that this would be particularly applicable in America where "we are trying to realize an ideal of family life in which husband and wife may have specialization but equality of status." He further suggests that the requirements for this friendship should be:

1. A certain fundamental unity of outlook on life.
2. A repertoire of shared appreciations.
3. Existence of interests apart from the friendship.

Carrol A. Wise¹⁷ has suggested that it is impossible to prevent some unhappy marriages due to the presence of unconscious negative factors in the process of choosing a mate. Already hinted at in the above is the matter of unresolved relations with parents in childhood which still has the man looking for another mother and the girl seeking another father. Also, Wise would have us consider the nearly automatic response of courting couples to put their best foot forward to gain a favorable response. There are young people who are unhappy with their parents and who seek a way out in marriage--probably a way out that sacrifices the time necessary for proper preparation. Other people run away from a job they don't like or from which they want to be released, particularly a

¹⁶J. H. Howson, "Emotional Maturity and the Approach to Marriage" in Plan for Marriage, ed. by J. K. Folsom, pp. 62 ff.

¹⁷Wise, Pastoral Counseling, pp. 170 ff.

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girl who is beginning to feel the dragging effect of a constant work schedule. Many boys and girls carry with them into marriage strong negative factors in the guise of feelings of guilt in relation to previous sex behavior.

It is in situations like the above that in the pre-marital counseling situation the ministerial counselor would like to help but realizes that his probing might result in his client going on the defensive.

The matter of "falling in love" has received a great deal of attention as being a source of potential trouble in marriage. Entering marriage has by some been called an impulsive act based on emotional feelings usually attached to what is called "being in love."

The intention is not to disparage the meaning of love, but to help young people to consider what they mean by love and what it does not mean. Professional counselors would point out that couples fall in love on the basis of a very few desirable traits without then stopping to examine the rest of the character make-up of the individual, the object of their affection.

But the experts feel that the real danger with the idea of love lies in the fact that "Many people of both sexes are a little more in love with love and romance than they are with the person they want to marry" ¹⁸

¹⁸English and Pearson, Emotional Problems of Living, p. 317.

More than enough has already been said in many different places about the influence of Hollywood, and now television, upon the American concept of love and romance. It is true that these sources of entertainment exert a tremendous influence and much of it is not of the highest nature. Usually love is not treated as a means to marriage, but as an end in itself, so that the picture can end where the problems of the family only begin--at the altar.

Because of these influences, and others of a similar nature, the young man or woman today, seeking a mate, feels that somewhere, someone particularly designed for him is waiting. Not only that, but in the very design of things, it will be inevitable that the two fated for each other will meet, and usually recognize their affinity immediately.

In addition, "an average American . . . will believe that there is something inevitable, changeless, unique and irreplaceable about this connection of his love feeling with the object, 'Mary'."¹⁹

It is natural that a person will change his feelings about many things in life. The same is true in his love feelings. There will be some change in love feelings with every change in the family situation, with every child born into the family, with every passing year as age slows down some of our responses and causes us to look at things differently and to change the emphasis.

¹⁹Folsom, "Finding a Mate in Modern Society," p. 84.

Young people should be made to realize that their ideal of changelessness is a dream that can readily turn into a nightmare. But it need not, for what they really want is not changelessness but a continuity of the supreme love relation. They can get this continuity by being willing to accept change. Their marriage will change from the romantic ideal of perfection which they had envisaged, but in its place will be a relationship based upon the realities of facing the problems of marriage together and "the possibility of maintaining this love relation . . . at a high intensity throughout life."²⁰

We have looked at some of the general problem areas of marriage and preparation for marriage that are the cause of widespread concern. The matter has not been exhausted by far, for we have not considered the effect of the economic system under which we live nor the provocative questions of religious antagonisms, social inequalities, oblique family relationships, factors of age, the low marriage rate of groups (college women graduates, for example) considered highly eligible, matters of health, or many others. Some will be considered in following chapters.

Suggested Approaches

It would appear necessary at this point to consider some of the suggested approaches to the cure or avoidance of problem areas looked at above.

²⁰Ibid., p. 84.

Laws have been one means used to avoid some of the more obvious difficulties that might arise. Many states have required waiting periods after application for the marriage license and before the wedding can take place. This is largely directed at the once frequent, hasty, fraudulent, drunken, and runaway marriages.

Other laws have gained popularity in the different states, such as age limits set for minimum marriage ages for both sexes and ages whereby marriage may take place with the consent of parent or guardian; physical examinations to prevent the spread of venereal disease; and some few states have added sterilization laws, others aimed at prevention of the marriage of the feeble minded. All states have some type of limitation regarding the marriage of people related by blood.

Some counselors who deal frequently with couples preparing for marriage have tried to face some of the problems that are present in the realm of personality. This has been approached by the means of various tests such as those designed by the American Institute of Family Relations or the scale of values test created by Allport and Vernon.²¹

The strongest suggestions, however, for methods to meet some of the areas of concern, are in the field of education. Some of the suggested programs partake of a formal nature and under the direction of some recognized social organization,

²¹G. W. Allport and P. E. Vernon.

such as the Y.M.C.A.; others are designed to depend upon cultural and religious organizations such as the home, school, and church. The methods in each may differ; the end is similar. Some depend upon group instruction, others upon individual counseling instruction.

Goldstein²² has suggestions for both group and individual. He suggests introducing the individual young people to the vast array of literature that is at hand and related to the project of marriage and establishing a family. Most town libraries have, if not an impressive array, at least enough material to help one to become aware of the important areas to consider in planning for married life. In addition, many ministers have developed sections in their libraries dealing with various phases of marriage. The pastor is usually willing to put these books out on loan to persons seriously interested. Some churches have small libraries, oftentimes including helpful books on marriage.

In the group educational program, Goldstein has indicated "An adequate educational program in any agency or institution, private, religious, or governmental, would include series of lectures, study groups, institute and full courses on marriage and the family."²³

Much criticism has been made public in regard to the

²²S. E. Goldstein, Marriage and Family Counseling, p. 46.

²³Ibid., p. 27.

alleged fact that all of the agents who could and should assume responsibility in the area of education for marriage have neglected this recognized vital task. It may be true that in all too many instances the home has faced the task with less than wisdom, if they faced it at all; and often the other agents have ignored the challenge asserting that it was one of the functions of the home. Presently, it would appear that more conscientious effort than ever before is being expended toward the end of a more adequate education for marriage.

Lester W. Dearborn,²⁴ in a series of informal discussions held at the Children's Hospital, Boston in December-January, 1955-1956, pointed out that he noted the questions regarding sex and marriage, asked by 18-19 year old girls, were the same questions asked by the girls of 12-13 years. This indicated to him that they never did get the answers when they first asked them. He further elaborated that education for marriage begins in or near the cradle, a sex education covering the years of growth. Both observations point to the need of the home in the vital program of education.

Not all education is of a formal book-nature type, nor is it limited to the cradle age nor to the adult preparing for marriage.

Popenoe in Marriage Before and After agrees with Dear-

²⁴Director, Boston Marriage Counseling Service.

born in this regard. He spoke of a group of young men who "recognized four steps as greatly needed and now too often lacking in their education at adolescence. These are:

1. Mere facts to dispel their ignorance
2. Good mental hygiene throughout adolescence
3. Adequate social life is necessary to promote emotional maturity
4. Future successful marriage must be kept before these young people as the goal, since 90% of those who grow up will marry."²⁵

Education is not the total answer to any problem, not even the dispelling of ignorance, but it should not be neglected as the very potent force that it is in preparing our people for marriage. It would seem most reasonable to suppose that cultural and social organizations should join in such a program, each showing the relationship of the family to itself and to the entire society.

²⁵Paul Popenoe, pp. 87 ff.

CHAPTER III

Trouble Areas in Pre-Marital and Marital Experience

Divorce

Many studies have been made as to the numbers and the trend in the national divorce rate. Other studies have tried to localize the difficulties in marriage to certain trouble spots, others have looked for the possibility of predicting success or failure in marriage based upon the conditions found in certain marriages compared with pre-marital attitudes and experiences in those same marriages. Our purpose might best be met here if we try to determine what are the major trouble spots and what is their nature.

Divorce is the dramatic evidence of failure in marriage. It is easily recognized, easier to tabulate than other forms of marriage failure, and usually it is more permanent in nature. No one would claim that divorce represents the totality of marriage failure, for it is supposed that many couples continue their marriage in spite of failure to be happy, to adjust to each other in a favorable way, or to find that there is much interest in common. Admitting, then, the partial nature of such figures, it is still needful that we look at them.

In 1945 it was pointed out by Goldstein that "Since 1870 the population increased 300%, marriages increased 400%, di-

vorces increased 2000%." ¹

He examined the trend by the following chart:

1867- 10,000 divorces in the United States
1896- 42,000 divorces
1906- 72,000
1916-112,000
1929-201,000 (Crest of prosperity)
1937-250,000
1943-300,000 divorces in the United States

Ray expressed it this way: "Approximately one marriage out of six ends in divorce. And these are only the failures which reach public attention. Of the others, a vast number are unhappy" ²

Christensen has since indicated that the post-war trend (since World War II) has reached about one divorce for every three or four marriages. Using as his source Provisional Marriage and Divorce Statistics, United States, 1948, he footnotes the following figures:

". . . an estimated 405,000 divorces for 1948 as compared with 1,802,895 marriages. Respective figures were 483,000 and 1,991,878 for 1947; 610,000 and 2,291,045 for 1946; and 485,000 and 1,612,992 for 1945." ³

Divorce is not an isolated phenomena. It is associated with periods of prosperity, when the rate is likely to be high.

¹Sidney E. Goldstein, Marriage and Family Counseling, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1945), p. 6.

²Randolph Ray, Marriage is a Serious Business (New York, McGraw Hill Book Co., Inc., 1944), p. 107.

³Harold T. Christensen, Marriage Analysis (New York, The Ronald Press Co., 1950), p. 13.

On the other hand, in times of depression, the marriage rate, which is high in prosperous times, tends to lower and this, in turn, is reflected in the downward trend in the divorce rate. In times of international tension, when large military forces are kept on the ready, it would appear that the marriage and divorce rates are both stimulated.

Figures of divorce seem to indicate that the length of marriage before divorce is getting shorter, that more women ask for divorces than men, that the legal reasons expressed for the divorce are not always the actual causes.

It is because of this last fact, that it is necessary to look further than the divorce court to find the trouble areas in marriage. Divorce is just the symptom of the real cause of the trouble which actually may be hidden deep within the personal makeup of one or both partners. The object of pre-marital interest and study for preparation for marriage should not be to aim simply at the maintaining of marriages and thus reducing divorce statistics, but to aim for a greater degree of happiness in marriage, for a relationship with internal rewards and satisfactions, for the understanding of the personalities involved in the partnership so that they are in a position to grow together and join in the development of like interests. If these factors are produced in marriage, then the continuity of the individual marriage is a natural by-product.

Thus our search is not to distinguish between the stated or the real reasons in divorce, but to find the deep, specific

areas of maladjustment and unhappiness in marriage itself.

Exploring Areas of Concern

Numerous studies in the field of marriage have explored much of the ground and given many clues as to the problems in marital adjustment. Since 1920, no less than seventeen major inquiries have been made by competent scholars into the question of marital adjustment. The studies were made in various parts of the United States, particularly in the northern half of the country. The size of the samples studied ran from a modest fifty couples to about one thousand couples. Some of these were engaged couples, with a follow-up of the same couples after marriage; others were equally divided between married and divorced couples; still others were of divorced and remarried people; and one study was concerned with "genius subjects and their spouses." Criteria of marital adjustment usually took the form of answers to posed questions or reply to questionnaires. Some of the investigations used the judgement of friends in rating the marriage as happy or unhappy, the couple adjusted or maladjusted; others used the divorced as representing the maladjusted, the married for adjusted; and in at least one survey, self-ratings on a happiness scale were used.

No matter how we approach adjustment in family or marital relationship, natural difficulties must be faced. It is possible to decide on certain factors that seem to affect the

marriage relationship, but whatever they might be, they cannot be treated as isolated one from the other. They do not operate in isolated fashion, but interact with one another, as do the individuals themselves in the marriage and family structure.

In practical experience, we cannot consider the cultural background of one of the partners totally apart from the economic factors in the marriage any more than we can neglect the relation to the cultural background of the other partner.

Most of the studies had to make a few basic assumptions in determining what constituted marital adjustment, hence providing also a point of view of what might be termed maladjustment.

Burgess and Cottrell⁴ assumed the following for the purpose of measuring marital adjustment:

1. Essential agreement between husband and wife upon matters that might be made critical issues in the relationship.
2. A substantial number of common interests and joint activities.
3. The more frequent the overt demonstrations of affection and mutual confidences.
4. Complaints would indicate the level of adjustment.
5. Less well-adjusted couples would report more often feelings of loneliness, boredom than the well-adjusted.

The same study found that there were eleven important matters useful in measuring the extent of agreement and dis-

⁴Ernest W. Burgess and Leonard S. Cottrell, Jr., Predicting Success or Failure in Marriage (New York, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1939, pp. 47-48).

agreement between husband and wife.

1. Handling family finances.
2. Recreation.
3. Religion.
4. Demonstrations of affection.
5. Friends within marriage.
6. Intimate relations.
7. Caring for the baby.
8. Table manners.
9. Conventionality.
10. Philosophy of life.
11. Ways of dealing with in-laws.

The above list applies to areas within marriage. A very helpful list to consider in the planning for marriage is provided by Goldstein,⁵ as follows:

1. Preparation.
2. Economic security.
3. Health.
4. Temperament.
5. Interests.
6. Social background.
7. Race, religion, and nationality.
8. Standards and ideals.
9. Sincerity.
10. Age.
11. Childhood home.
12. Children.

Some of the suggestions in the above are cryptic, but helpful. As we are interested in the preparation for marriage as well as the areas of difficulty within marriage, the following will represent a blending of these two efforts.

Religion does play an important part both in the preparation for marriage and in the family, particularly if it is a "well-adjusted" or "happy" family, but it does not appear to

⁵Sidney E. Goldstein, Marriage and Family Counseling (New York, McGraw Hill, 1945), pp. 56 ff.

be a very weighty factor in the trouble area which breaks up the family.

Let us examine this a little closer. In a later part of this study, it will be noted that contemporary religious counselors do with some frequency place religious differences as the most important factor in pre-marital counseling. There may be several reasons why these counselors place it so high on their list, which will be considered later; but among other things, it may reflect their experience with couples who come to them for counseling. And here may lie the secret. If a couple with different religious affiliations has reached the planning stage for marriage, certainly one of the things they will need to discuss, and the pressure of family and friends, the dire predictions of churches in general, will probably reinforce their feeling of the necessity to discuss the religious difference. The common experience of many a religious counselor would verify this assumption. It would appear that many of these planned "mixed-marriages" do not occur. There are only a few possible choices open to the couple in regard to their decision as to what to do with their religions. It becomes a choice of marrying as is, of changing allegiance to one side or the other, or to see the differences as too great to surmount and therefore sever the relationship. Thus the "selective factors before marriage prevent many unions where disagreement would have resulted in great unhappiness."⁶

⁶Burgess and Cottrell, Predicting, p. 51.

In a positive way religion does play an important part in preparation for marriage and within the family. It has been found important that before marriage both husband and wife expressed their religious life by frequent church attendance. And likewise where the practice has continued after marriage, results have been noted in increased chances for happiness. In addition, several studies found that religious home training and regular Sunday School training likewise paid off dividends in the form of happiness.⁷

In the same and similar studies, it was found that the happiness factor was again greater when the marriage took place at church, at the parsonage, or at home, and if the person performing the ceremony was the minister, priest, or rabbi.

Another factor that is often given recognition as having great importance in marital happiness is the advent of children. Yet several of the representative studies⁸ found that the presence or absence of children in the family had no apparent relationship to the happiness of the couple in their marriage. There are several reasons why a marriage may be childless, including sterility and no desire for children. These factors in themselves do not cause unhappiness, for there is not necessarily involved the desire for children in

⁷Lewis M. Terman, "Prediction Data: Predicting Marriage Failure from Test Scores," Marriage and Family Living, XII (1950), pp. 51-54.

⁸Gilbert V. Hamilton, A Research in Marriage, 1929; Jessie Bernard, "The Distribution of Success in Marriage," American Journal of Sociology, XXXIX (1933), pp. 194-203.

the one case, and in the other that fact is self apparent. Two of the studies,⁹ in addition to the above finding, also reported that they found indication of a strong correlation of happiness in marriage with the desire for children by both parents, and at the least no opposition involved from either.

Goldstein, in the above, placed health in a rather important position, and it should not be denied that health should be a very vital consideration in the planning of a couple for marriage. Ill health can cause a severe strain in marriage, but it can also draw people closer together in the area of mutual care and respect. It would appear that Locke would support such a point of view as he reported from his study that he saw no relationship between health and the presence of adjustment in marriage.¹⁰

Age factors in marriage apparently have only a slight unhappiness content. This may be largely due to the fact that again most of the great age differential which would provide difficulties in marriage are already eliminated by like consideration before marriage. However, the studies which considered the influence of age at the time of marriage in relation to success or happiness in the marriage, found that marriage at an early age presented many grave risks. If the wife was under twenty at the time of the wedding, there was risk of

⁹Burgess and Cottrell, Predicting . . .; and Harvey J. Locke, Predicting Adjustment in Marriage (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1951).

¹⁰Locke, Predicting . . ., p. 349.

unhappiness, and this risk was compounded if the husband was under twenty-four. The lesson presented by most studies is the avoidance of marriage in extreme youth.

On the other hand, it is long recognized that dangers of a nature do exist where marriage must be postponed until a later age. In times of depression, this is one of the trends. Education beyond high school also has the tendency to delay marriages. Family factors, such as care for younger children or the support of aged parents, often delay marriage beyond the years of youth. In general, the age for marriage has been rising in our culture with the rise in extended periods of education and the increase in the standard of living has encouraged a more firm financial footing before the venture of marriage.

"Certainly the trend toward later marriages on the part of men and women brings with it more and more anxiety and, because of selfish habits formed in living alone, less buoyancy and generosity to put into marriage."¹¹

English and Pearson mention a way in which earlier marriage might be stimulated, and also some of the advantages they feel are involved.

. . . for those who do desire an early marriage the matter can be worked out satisfactorily if the parents of the young people cooperate and help financially. Society should strive for early marriages. It is better for people to have children while they are young and still remember how they

¹¹O. Spurgeon England and Gerald H.J. Pearson, Emotional Problems of Living (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1945), p. 289.

felt as children and adolescents, while they have more interests in common. Also, children are less likely to lose parents through death or partially lose them through chronic illness. Early marriage is not a bad idea from an emotional standpoint, yet it is looked upon by society in general as a luxury of questionable value rather than as a potential social asset.¹²

It might be well to consider, however, in relation to such a suggestion, that the young people might then continue a relationship of dependency on their parents that would interfere with their own concept of adult responsibility, and thus interfere with their adjustment in marriage, which is based upon a response which would have to be unlearned later.

Age interest also appears in the matter of the age difference between husband and wife. Popularly, it is considered that happiness and success in marriage is fostered by the husband being somewhat older than the wife. Certainly very few people would ordinarily feel that a vast difference in the ages would encourage the companionship aspect of marriage, produce many life interests, or create a host of mutual friendships. In studies such as those already mentioned, it has been noted that the nearer the ages come together, the higher the ratio of happiness. Locke in his study of 929 persons, of whom 401 were married couples, found a positive correlation to adjustment in marriage if husband and wife were "about the same age."¹³

¹²Ibid., p. 288.

¹³H. J. Locke, Predicting Adjustment, p. 343.

When we speak of the length of pre-marital acquaintance, some allowance must be made for the intensity, or concentration of the relationship. Under some conditions, a couple get to see each other quite frequently and under a variety of conditions, as in a school or college friendship, and do get a much more adequate impression of each other than in a situation where contact is limited to one or two evenings a week.

However we look at it, this matter of time to get to know each other is very important. Time must be used wisely as a time for investigation before the permanent investment of self and time in marriage. Now many of us can immediately recall stories of people, some we may even know, who were married after a phenomenally short period of acquaintance. Their marriages have worked out well, they are still very happy. It is certainly to be supposed that, with all the people there are in our country, many times people who complement each other do meet and have the good fortune to recognize their affinity within a short time. But that is not to be supposed as the typical but rather the answer-to-the-dream type of thing. Usually, when couples meet, a rather long period of getting to know each other is involved--a time in which the couple may be able to pick out the conflict and the danger areas, followed by a period in which they might be able to resolve the potential difficulties and the difficulties at hand. Furthermore,

¹³H. J. Locke, Predicting Adjustment, . . . , p. 343.

this is the wise procedure; a few extra months is not too big a price to pay for many years of happiness and security.

The engagement period may be considered as part of the period of pre-marital acquaintance, yet it should never be considered the same thing, or merely an extension of the same. The engagement period has its own peculiar character. It is a time of planning, a time of closer, more intimate relationship. It is a time of testing, knowing that marriage itself is in the offing. One has said that engagements are made to be broken. And that is a true view. The engagement is "broken" by the wedding ceremony as the couple start on the meaningful task of becoming one, or it is broken, preferably by mutual consent, when the couple comes to the conclusion that to marry would be a mistake.

The engagement period in that respect is the buffer-state before marriage. It is a valuable asset not to be thrown lightly aside.

Popenoe has this very thought-provoking remark to make: ". . . of the unhappily married persons who come to the Institute of Family Relations for help in solving their domestic problems, 40% admit that they had no engagement period whatever."¹⁴

What about family background? Do the cultural elements of the parents influence the adjustment of the husband and

¹⁴Paul Popenoe, Marriage Before and After (New York: Wilfred Funk, Inc., 1943), p. 123.

wife in marriage? These are quite natural questions to ask. For even though we have a more or less common culture in America, there is a great deal of variation found within it. There are differences in financial standing, in the prestige attached to certain jobs or professions, in racial and national origins, in social status which often is of more importance than a top-bracket income, and there are the potent differences that arise from geographical location, and those of rural or urban living.

Findings seem to indicate that on the whole these differences in the cultural backgrounds of the parents are not highly important. This may be due in part to the willingness of the culture in which we live to accept differences expressed in mates as part of the norm.

Folsom explains it this way: "Under our American romanticism, cultural differences between mates are not so serious a difficulty as they are in caste societies, where marrying outside the pale is a family disgrace."¹⁵

On the other hand, there is one element in the family background of the married couple that assumes a great deal of significance. All the major studies of the last twenty or so years, which considered the fact at all, pointed out that happiness of the parent's marriage correlated to the extreme degree with adjustment, or happiness, in the children's marriage.

¹⁵Joseph Kirk Folsom, "Finding a Mate in Modern Society," in Plan for Marriage, ed. by J. K. Folsom (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1938), p. 91.

It appears, then, that "we may say with some certainty that the family constellation of relationships of attachment or of conflict exert an influence upon the person which may fit or unfit him for marriage."¹⁶

As we shall note later, counselors put different stress upon the matter of educational differences in marriage, and this might reflect the findings of various studies, which do not appear to be firm in any one direction. Generally speaking, wives like to marry a man who has somewhat more education than do they, and this arrangement appears to be quite acceptable to men who, as a rule, prefer to marry a girl who has not reached their educational level. This arrangement seems to have little correlation with success in marriage. A more significant factor would be the level of general intelligence, rather than of educational attainment. Where there is great disparity in intelligence, trouble may arise more readily within the marriage.

However, in regard to the educational level of husband and wife, it is quite apparent that increased chances of success in marriage go with a rising level of educational achievement of both husband and wife. Men and women with a college education, or more, score very well in marital happiness and adjustment, and in consistent fashion; but it must be remembered that higher educational attainment is often bound with other factors that are positively correlated with success in

¹⁶Eurgess and Cottrell, Predicting, p. 113.

marriage, i.e., economic status, type of neighborhood.

The Major Areas of Concern in Marriage

Concerning the more important trouble areas within marriage, again we find that there is not complete agreement. However, there are certain troubles which are treated as being exceedingly common expressed in terms of maladjustment and unhappiness in marriage. Several of the studies support this emphasis, though not in the order suggested below. Burgess and Cottrell, Locke, and Christensen treat these matters in studies already quoted, and Landis in a study not previously quoted in this paper.¹⁷

The following is the list of the danger areas which we will use:

1. Aim in life.
2. Sex relations.
3. Mutual friends.
4. Relations with in-laws.
5. Finances.
6. Time spent together.
7. Personality factors.

1. Aim in Life:

The aim in life might be better stated as a philosophy of life. One of the criteria of maturity is the possession of

¹⁷ Judson T. Landis, "Length of Time Required to Achieve Adjustment in Marriage," American Sociological Review, XI (December, 1946), pp. 666-677.

a philosophy of life, a drawing force that will help in treading through the dark and discouraging days that come into every marriage as well as into every life. There is a positive aspect to this idea when the philosophy of life is a religious experience and practice, or when the aim in life is the dedication to the raising of a family.

Earlier it was pointed out that differences in religion did not play a large part in unhappiness in marriage. But if the philosophy of life of either partner pertains to a religious experience and that of the other does not fit with this idea, then trouble and maladjustment, unhappiness are imminent. The difficulty lies in the area of religious activity.

If there is a lack of an aim in life on the part of both husband and wife, an indication of immaturity, then trouble is near the threshold.

"Two people who have no philosophy of life to give cohesion and significance to their daily routine of living lack one of the most valuable assets for marital happiness."¹⁸

2. Sex Relations:

Judson T. Landis in his study (mentioned above) found that it took longer for spouses to work out satisfactory sexual adjustments than any other adjustments in marriage. In fact, in his study of 409 couples, he found that 12.5% of them never did reach that state of adjustment, by their own stand-

¹⁸J. Howard Howson, "Family Life and Religion," in Plan for Marriage, ed. by Folsom, p. 224.

ards.

The Institute of Family Relations reported that in at least 90% of all cases of marital disharmony brought to their attention, a sexual maladjustment was involved.

It is to be remembered that the sexual area in marriage is complex, not representing simply an adjustment in one item of sexual conduct. Further, it should be kept in mind that many of these difficulties are symptomatic in nature. Sexual maladjustment is often more an effect of other factors in the relationship than it is a cause. Even so, the possible range of sexual conduct and need is bound to create many problems of adjustment in its own right.

A study by Popenoe suggests that three factors are dominant in good sexual adjustment:

1. Normal adult emotional attitudes on the part of both husband and wife.
2. The relative equality of sexual drive.
3. Normal responsiveness of the wife.¹⁹

Each one of these factors provide marriages with a disturbing amount of conflict. They are reflections of long term innate difficulties of personality development.

We have room merely to suggest other difficulties in the area of sexual adjustment. These should include a mention of what has been termed "one of the most startling facts about our changing culture." That is that "children are no longer considered an inevitable or even necessary fulfillment of

¹⁹Paul Popenoe, Marriage Before and After, pp. 186-189.

marriage."²⁰

In this respect the matter of birth control often becomes a matter of concern, sometimes related to religious teaching, at other times to personal feelings and conviction.

There is also evidence in studies that one of the great lacks of couples is the dearth of knowledge of the psychology of sex.

3. Mutual friends:

One of the clear conclusions found in the study of Burgess and Cottrell was "that the wife with 'almost no' male friends before marriage is the poorest matrimonial risk."²¹

The newly married couple often finds that their interests in friends, likewise brings problems of a serious nature. As they enter into the first phases of becoming one, they must also be aware that as one, they must also try to fit into the world around them. That involves the accepting or rejecting of their mate's old friends, the forming of new mutual friendships, and moving into the realm of new family relations. Any one of these endeavors can cause a great deal of trouble, particularly where the couple may not have developed mutual respect. Mutual friendships should not be formed to the exclusion of individual friendships of both partners. When marriage is made into a monopoly, trouble will follow.

²⁰Mary Shattuck Fisher, "Modern Parenthood," in Plan for Marriage, ed. by Folsom, p. 196.

²¹Burgess and Cottrell, Predicting . . ., p. 130.

4. Relations with In-laws:

The relations with the in-laws often grow out of the attitudes created in the courting period. If, during that period, there was a lack of approval by the parents of one or the other of the couple, then it would seem that such an attitude might continue and cause unpleasant relations after the wedding. Oftentimes, when the couple, or one of them, is too young to be married without parental consent and this is forthcoming only after a struggle, then again we have fertile ground for continuing difficulties in the in-law relationships.

It is noted that much of this in-law friction is a feminine concern, probably because of the close intimacy that women have with child-bearing and child care. Yet we are all aware of the husband aggravated situation where the culinary arts of wife and mother are compared at the expense of the wife.

There are other instances where an over-attachment between parent and child threatens the harmony of the newly married couple. Many women find after marriage that they are expected to carry on the mother role for their emotionally immature husbands. Or, on the other hand, some girls use mother and home as an escape from any of the difficulties or early arguments that arise.

Two other in-law problems assume significant proportions. Having to share one home (of one of the parental groups) for the first few months after the wedding is one of them. It

would appear that the usual adjustments necessary after marriage are weighty enough without adding this burden.

Probably even more difficult a situation arises when parents must come to live with son or daughter because of the need for financial support. This is more often the case later in marriage when age interferes with parental income, and often physical disabilities of a slight nature are added.

These difficulties with in-laws probably could be faced with good judgement where the understanding of the couple is deep and meaningful, but the number of people involved and the emotional nature of the interaction poses a danger to marital adjustment that should be gravely considered.

5. Finances:

The amount of money coming into a family is not a fact without significance, for upon this depends how the family fares in regard to diet, recreation, and often to the amount of worry that is involved; but on the whole, studies referred to point that there is some evidence "to indicate that it is not the amount of income but its degree of certainty which is related to marital happiness."²²

Many marriages get off to a bad start in terms of adequacy of income and the security provided by a certain income. Others are equally handicapped by an overabundant income and a certainty about it that obviates the necessity of careful

²²Ibid., p. 143.

planning. In the last analysis, it may be the way in which the couple manages the income that has importance.

Economics in the home creeps out into other areas of family interest; children, for instance. In one study of 862 couples who were childless, 582 of the couples were childless voluntarily. Of these, 224 couples ascribed direct and indirect financial reasons, 96 citing economic pressure and 128 couples placing the responsibility upon the wife's working.²³

And we find that the need of bolstering the family income is one of the major reasons for wives working. Another is the need they feel for some kind of financial independence, so called. This is one of the extreme dangers in the family money program. A more healthy consideration of community interest in all income, usually pays off in terms of family spirit. The family must assume in earnest one of its roles, that of economics.

Popenoe has made some suggestions as to why there is a reluctance on the part of many men in marriage to take their wives into full partnership financially.

1. Sometimes the man has been brought up in the patriarchal tradition.
2. Another important reason for a man's insistence on holding the purse-strings is his more or less unconscious feeling that this is the only way he can dominate his wife.
3. Another type of man keeps his wife ignorant of what he is doing, because he has something to cover up (gambling, for example).

²³Paul Popenoe, op. cit., p. 153.

4. Finally, many a man keeps his wife ignorant of his affairs because he has found by costly experience that²⁴ he is genuinely unworthy of his confidence.

Again, with mature judgement and planning the financial problems of marriage can be met so as to cement the relationship on firm ground, but it is wise to recognize the problems that do occur, and sound out attitudes in advance and even do a little advance planning.

6. Time Spent Together:

This thought presupposes there will be time available to spend together. The usual pattern is for husband, and sometimes wife too, to work all day at the job, and have play time in the evening, unless one is too tired. Often, too, couples work on different shifts and rarely get much time together except on the week-ends. The present trend toward suburban living has brought additional travel hours between home and job, interfering with husband-wife and father-children relationship to a greater extent than ever.

Yet we must remain aware of the fact that, on the whole, people have more leisure today than ever, and the trend in the next decade should be even further in that direction. So it becomes very important how people plan and use their leisure time as a family.

Leisure can be abused by "decreative" activity which produces abundant problems within marriage. Creative outside

²⁴Ibid., pp. 177-180.

activities and interests are indicative of happiness in the marriage. Marital adjustment calls for a large amount of joint participation.

7. Personality Factors:

All of the above problem areas could, with justification, be pointed to as parts of this bigger problem of personality development. And it is not to be supposed that there are only troubled differences in personality factors, for there also lies the reason for many of the highly successful adjustments made even in the face of tremendous odds of circumstances.

We have mentioned previously the adolescent traits of thought and behavior that enter marriage, that many of the husband-wife relationships are not mature relationships in the best sense of the word. We have recognized the influence of parents in creating more stable personalities in their children through happy homes, that good sexual adjustment in marriage is a product of the complete personality development. At this point we add some new considerations, attitudes associated with "glamour," with possessiveness within marriage, the inability to allow for the need of increased accommodation necessary, a clash of roles in marriage reflecting a misconception of role, and unwillingness for either party to give in to the other, an inability to assume responsibility, a lack of leadership in home and in the community, a tendency to be too easily influenced by others therefore

losing respect of the mate, a dominating attitude in the home, a yielding to anger too easily, lacking a sense of humor.

The "abnormal" personality does not need to be considered here, for enough points of danger can be seen in the strictly "normal" expressions of personality.

At some length we have looked at a few of the danger areas that are seen in the period of preparation for marriage and then glanced at a few of the apparently more important danger areas within marriage itself. In the following sections we shall examine some evidence to determine whether or not these concerns are also the concerns of couples in their preparation for marriage, and if the counselors meet these needs.

CHAPTER IV

Meeting Pre-Marital Needs in Counseling

In the last chapter we looked at some of the trouble areas in marriage and found that many of them were reflections of similar problems in the pre-marital considerations. Keeping this in mind, let us look at the situation as it may be expressed in some pre-marital counseling situations and see if there appears to be a high awareness of significant marriage problems on the part of the client.

There are certain needs of prospective marriage partners including an understanding of the partner's roles in marriage, in sex, in extra-marital friendships, in attitudes regarding children, and the place of the family in the community and its institutions.

Goldstein points out that "The pre-marital conference is designed to answer the questions--of young men and women who are about to be married, and it arranges for a discussion of the problems that vex them."¹

He further points out that the best procedure to follow in order to fulfill the function of the pre-marital conference is for the counselor to make it known that he is ready to dis-

¹Sidney E. Goldstein, Marriage and Family Counseling, (New York, McGraw Hill, 1945), pp. 30-34.

cuss any matter which the clients desire. He feels that a ready made lecture on the subject of marriage serves to alienate the young people.

Other counseling authorities verify this opinion. Wise says, "A person can be helped only with those situations which he feels constitute problems on which he really wants help, and then only to the extent he wants it."²

It has been noted with frequency, however, that the client often does not state first what is actually the problem with which he is concerned. Often times there is a period of sounding out the counselor. In pre-marital counseling, the couple may come with an "accepted" problem, one that is widely recognized as a problem and that has an "accepted" solution, whereas the real problem will be involved in the uniqueness of their own personalities. When confidence is gained, the real problem will then be stated.

The Needs of the Client

What are the things which the clients bring in the way of problems to discuss with the pre-marital counselor? Goldstein³ found that the questions of the couples were in the following fields: concerning the marriage ceremony, legal questions and legal problems involved, economic matters, health,

²Carroll A. Wise, Pastoral Counseling, Its Theory and Practice (New York: Harpers, 1951), p. 174.

³Goldstein, op. cit., pp.35-43.

psychological, ethical and religious problems.

Bowman tried to "type" the kind of cases in his own experience.

All of the following types of pre-marital cases have come to the attention of the present writer in his role as teacher-counselor in connection with a college course in marriage education.

1. Cases in which the most prominent element is a need or desire for more information. For example . . . questions about sex, reproduction, venereal disease, or something similar

2. Cases in which the most prominent element is a personal maladjustment, a psychological, anatomical or physiological problem.

a. Fear. For example . . . of one's own ability to succeed in marriage.

b. Repulsion or aversion. For example . . . repulsed at the thought of sexual experience in marriage

c. Anxiety or worry.

d. Over-attachment . . . to parent.

e. Continuation of an immature pattern.

f. Homosexuality.

g. Masturbation.

h. Menstrual problems.

3. Cases in which the most prominent element is an unsolved problem which involves a need for resolution and decision going beyond merely more information and not necessarily involving elements of the sort mentioned under 2. above.

a. Mixed marriage, especially Catholic-Protestant and Jewish-Gentile but also cases in which the "mixture" would be one due to difference in age, education, economic status, nationality, race, previous marital experience.

b. Broken or breaking engagement.

c. Hasty marriage.

d. Too early marriage.

e. Postponement of marriage.

f. Parents: . . . open rebellion against parents, sometimes making for unwise decision to marry; parents' attachment to counselee; parental objection to marriage; parents attempting to push or force marriage, or choice of mate

g. Mate selection.

- h. Sexual intercourse before marriage.
 - 1. Guilt or concern about sexual indiscretions or pregnancy
- j. Money; how much is needed to get married the pros and cons of parental subsidy of marriage.
- k. How long an engagement should be and what are a person's privileges and responsibilities during engagement?
 - 1. The pros and cons of marrying while in college; should such a marriage be kept secret?
- m. There are legal complications.⁴

One social service worker who handles hundreds of general counseling situations in the course of a year, in an anonymous report, placed in the order of importance in her experience, the following as referred to pre-marital problems in counseling:

- 1. Concerns with personality differences.
- 2. Regarding length of acquaintance.
- 3. The matter of educational differences.
- 4. Problems of religious differences.
- 5. Attitude in regard to having children.
- 6. Sexual areas.
- 7. Concerning differences in social and cultural areas.
- 8. Savings needed for marriage.
- 9. The question of age for marriage and age differences in marriage.

The above sources apply to actual counseling in the area of preparation for marriage. It is of interest to note how, and to what extent, these actual problems correlate with the potential trouble areas expressed in our survey thus far.

There are four specific areas of our problems which are reported in all three of the above sources as of definite interest in the concerns of couples planning marriage. These

⁴Henry Bowman, "The Teacher as Counselor in Marriage Education," Marriage and Family Living, IX, pp. 2-3.

four are: sexual problems, problems concerned with finances, the matter of personality factors, and differences in religion. The fact of the emphasis on this last matter bears out the reasoning earlier that a great many people must face this problem on the pre-marital level and make some satisfactory adjustment, for the problem loses some significance after marriage.

The other three (sex, finances, personality problems) took their place as among the most severe problem areas within marriage. Of course, each one of these expresses itself in various ways, so that awareness of them might well be heightened in the period just before marriage.

Two of the lists of pre-marital counseling interests mentioned the matter of age, including the problems raised by age "mixture" in marriage and that of the too early marriage.

Also in two of the lists were the matters of length of acquaintance, including the question of the length of the engagement period and the impact of cultural background. The latter interest in features of the background are expressed in terms of differences in education and in nationality, race, and social status.

Attitude toward wanting children and factors of health have only one mention each, although from the body of the study above, it would appear that the matter of attitude, at least in relation to desire for children, does have some significance in terms of happiness in marriage.

The problem areas which were totally lacking of mention, in the three lists of pre-marital interviews, deserve some consideration. These were: the matter of mutual friends and the question of time the couple spent together. Both of these matters were considered as having a great deal of significance within marriage. That may be true and this finding should not cast a great deal of doubt upon it. It may be that these two problem areas are hidden in the courting experience. The matter of time together is well cared for, as most couples find the desire to be with each other very strong during the period of getting acquainted and engagement. The question of mutual friendships is often hidden by limited double dating, plus the fact that usually where some disagreements are encountered in regard to friends of either, the couple may find it not difficult to reach an agreement, in fact much easier than they might when the same problem arises after marriage.

All in all, the figures and facts we have above, in relation to the problems which concern couples in the pre-marital counseling situation, are too limited in extent to justify the drawing of any specific conclusions. However, some general conclusions are in order.

It would appear that couples approaching marriage are aware of problems to the extent of seeking help. Also it is noted that severe problems of marriage do have some bearing on the pre-marital discussion, indicating that to some meaningful degree, the clients are aware of the significance of

the problems. Further, we can note that couples, at least those couples who went to the counselors, are willing to face the problems that do come up rather than just give up to the very weight of the problem itself, and that these couples see marriage as important enough to warrant some effort beforehand to assure a measure of success. Finally, we might conclude that some of the acute problem areas within marriage appear neglected, probably in part because of their everyday quality and the fact that they are not highly "popularized" as are some of the other problems.

Many students in the field of marriage, and those who are interested in making marriage a better risk, would agree with Popenoe that the interest which couples express in the preparation of marriage is not only indicative of healthy attitudes now, but augers well for marital success. He says, while viewing the divorce statistics, "A very moderate amount of effort in advance would have prevented the majority of these broken homes. The proof: not one divorce occurred among couples who came to the American Institute of Family Relations for pre-marital assistance, during the first eight years of its existence."⁵

It is in the areas which we have been discussing that the needs of couples preparing for marriage exist. We have taken a very inadequate sample to see how some of these needs

⁵Paul Popenoe, Marriage Before and After (New York: Wilfred Funk, Inc., 1943), p. 3.

are expressed by those who come to counselors for pre-marital assistance. It might be of some service were we to look now at the pre-marital counselor to see if the needs of the clients are likely to be met in the counseling situation.

In an earlier chapter, the requirements and characteristics of counselors was viewed. Then we looked at the pre-marital counselor with particular emphasis upon the clergy in the counseling role. Now we will examine the areas which clergy counselors consider important in pre-marital counseling and see if they coincide with the problem areas we have found in marriage and with the problems which the pre-marital clients recognize as their own.

The Counselor's Emphasis

Our chief source of material for the balance of this survey is secured from questionnaires which were sent to 114 religious counselors. Twenty of the counselors thus contacted were Roman Catholic, three were Jewish and the balance, ninety-one, were scattered in the Protestant denominations including the Episcopal, Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, Congregational Christian, Disciples of Christ, Evangelical and Reform, and Presbyterian churches. No effort was made to determine the religious classification of those who returned the questionnaire. The counselors were geographically spread from one coast to the other and deep into our southern states. The ages of these clergymen was probably representative for

the group as a profession, and was recorded in most cases, and may be useful to us in the concluding part of this survey. Seventy replies were received, although not all of these replied to all parts of the questionnaires. However, others, in response to a suggestion in the questionnaire, did write lengthy observations of a very helpful nature.

In one part of the questionnaire, the counselors were asked to list those problems which they considered most important in counseling in pre-marital situations. It is to be expected that these opinions are not entirely formed apart from the clergyman's experience in counseling, nor his training, his reading and continued studies, nor are they entirely free from "pet" ideas, yet it is to be felt that they must represent the best of his thinking on the matter.

Two of the counselors indicated that they had a compulsory discussion, or lecture with their clients. One followed a rather formal presentation of three points:

1. One man and woman with mutual respect and love.
2. Under God, life-long mates as persons.
3. Welcome, love guide any children given to the marriage.

The other, less formally, covered such things as length of acquaintance, plans of the couple regarding living area, work of the husband-to-be, and the use of a pamphlet on married sexual life.

The remaining sixty-eight counselors arranged these

factors in the following order of importance:

1. Religious differences.
2. Personality factors.
3. Sexual matters.
4. Economic areas of concern.
5. Length of acquaintance.
6. Educational differences.
7. Age and age differences.
8. Attitude toward having children.
9. Differences in social status.
10. In-law relationships, health factors and others.

Twenty-three of the counselors placed the matter of religious differences in first place. Twenty-two put the questions concerning the personality in first position. The total number placing personality factors in the first three positions was thirty-nine, whereas for the matter of religious differences fifty-one placed it in the first three positions.

The heavy score in favor of the importance of religious differences may be partly due to the fact that all our counselors are clergymen. They would have a higher awareness of such situations and probably be in a greater demand for help in dealing with problems concerned with mixed marriages. This thought would also be in keeping with our findings earlier where it would seem that a great many of these problems are settled or are eliminated in the pre-marital period, therefore losing some significance as a problem area within marriage. It is to be remembered that all three of the reports on actual pre-marital counseling situations did mention the matter of religious differences, while on the other hand we did not find the problem rated very severe in the studies of happiness or adjustment within marriage.

Likewise, the area of concern about personality factors did receive mention in all three of the pre-marital counseling statements at which we looked. And considering the varied aspects of the nature of personality differences, importance was placed in this matter within marriage.

The counselors above placed sexual matters in third place in importance, with twenty of them placing it in the first three top spots. Within marriage we found that sex problems were placed very high in the matter of producing conflict. It was also mentioned by all three of our reports on the subjects brought as problems to pre-marital counselors.

In fourth place, the clergymen placed economic areas of concern. We have treated this as covering several aspects such as the wife working, and we have no way of determining how wide a scope the counselors intended in their replies. However, suffice it to note that financial questions do appear with some frequency within marriage according to some of the studies we have glanced at. All three of the reports on pre-marital counseling interviews also mentioned that finances in one form or another entered the discussion.

There may be some significance in the fact that these four areas placed in such important positions by our sixty-eight counselors likewise received so much attention as trouble areas in marriage in terms of happiness and adjustment, and also were so consistently the concern of clients in the actual pre-marital counseling situations as recorded by the counselors

earlier in this chapter (pp. 65-66). It would at least imply that these are vital areas of concern, that clients recognize them as part of their need in pre-marital preparation, and that these particular needs may be met by the clergy counselor as he is aware of their significance and possibly has prepared himself to meet these questions with adequacy.

Items listed from five through ten by the counselors on the questionnaire also have appeared in lesser places of interest and importance in the other two lists which we are considering. Length of acquaintance, for example, was mentioned by two of the three who reported on the pre-marital counseling situations and was recognized by some of the studies mentioned earlier as having some correlation with happiness in marriage. The same is true in looking at the matters of educational differences and differences in social status which may be grouped together for the purpose of comparison as part of the cultural background of the couples planning marriage. As such, we found that it did not rate very high as a problem in marriage and was mentioned by two of our reports on the pre-marital counseling level.

Attitude toward having children, placed number eight by the sixty-eight counselors, was mentioned but by one of the counselors reporting the subject matter of their pre-marital interviews.

In returning for a moment to the list of the important problem areas in marriage, we find three areas which have been

largely neglected in the questionnaire replies. The matter of in-law relationships was given slight mention along with health factors. The relation with in-laws was only mentioned by one of the reports on the pre-marital counseling problems. Totally ignored by the sixty-eight counselors are the questions of mutual friends and the need of spending time in fellowship in marriage, both of which proved to be areas of much concern in terms of the matter of happiness and adjustment within marriage. Likewise both were totally ignored in the pre-marital counseling situations reported. We have already considered that these two problem areas may probably be rather hard to uncover in the pre-marital courting period and thus be neglected in the consideration of the clergymen who answered our questionnaire. But the fact that they are considered important problems within marriage should warrant their careful consideration in the preparation for marriage.

In taking an overall view of the opinions of the clergy counselors who answered the questionnaire, it would appear that they are expressing an awareness of many of the situations which should be discussed in pre-marital counseling if the intention is to meet the areas of concern which have appeared within marriage.

Certainly the coverage provided by the questionnaire is not large enough upon which to base definite conclusions, but a comparison of the three groups of findings, the vital problem areas within marriage, the problem areas which couples

take to counselors in actual pre-marital counseling, and the results of the questionnaire, should prove of interest to those looking at the trouble areas of our family life in terms of the pre-marital counseling situation.

Counselor's View of Values in Marriage

We can look at the findings of this part of the questionnaire in another light. In addition to providing the opinions of the counselors in relation to what they think of as important in pre-marital counseling, it also must reflect their concept of the values of marriage. What they stress here might be the places where they would put the values of marriage. How do these counselors look at marriage? Is it a reflection of the biological necessity of humanity, or is marriage a personal relationship, a blending of two personalities wherein sex and biological considerations play an important, but subordinate, role? Where do they seem to place the matter of religion in marriage?

A look will reveal that in the matter of religious interest, the clergymen put it in the place of first importance twenty-three times, placed it second nineteen times and third nine times, for a total of fifty-one. The point of view, that the answers of the counselors might also indicate where they place the values in marriage, could also be used to explain further the leading position by far of this particular area.

In terms of personality, the counselors placed this

first twenty-two times, while eight of them placed this as second in importance and nine placed it third, making a total of thirty-nine in the first three positions. It would thus appear that these counselors place a great deal of emphasis upon the value of the consideration of the total personality in marriage; therefore marriage is not to be entered into lightly without considering the problems of the blending of the two personalities into one.

The mechanical, or biological, area of marriage takes a less important third as a value within marriage. Only four of the counselors put this in first place, with eleven and sixteen of them putting it in second and third respectively, for a total of thirty-one. This would seem to indicate that these counselors are aware of the importance of the biological questions in general but do not see them as the primary force or value in marriage. Do they see sex as but a part of the total personality? Their order of emphasis would suggest this.

To put it in another way, the above results would mean that 75% of the answers received placed religious values of marriage in the first three places of importance, while 33.82% placed the religious value as that of greatest importance. It would appear that 57.35% of the counselors hold the importance of the personality factors in marriage by putting it in the first three places. 32.35% of the replies put this in the highest place. The emphasis upon the biological area of marriage was a weak third with the percentage placing it

within the first three brackets being 45.58%, with only 5.88% of the counselors putting this in first place.

These clergy counselors then have appeared to place their emphasis of the values in marriage on the spiritual and personality level, rightly placing the sexual-biological matters as subordinate.

Ten of the clergymen who answered the questionnaire did not record their age, one did not record his opinion, but it may be of some value to look at the answers of the fifty-seven who did, to see if there is any relationship between opinions and age. For this purpose we will divide the group in two, with those forty and above in one group and those younger in the second group. This put twenty-five counselors in the over-forty age bracket and the other thirty-two within the lower age group.

The forty and over group arranged the list in different order than did the whole group, and did so as follows:

1. Religious differences.
2. Personality factors.
3. Length of acquaintance.
4. Sexual matters.
5. Economic areas of concern.
6. Differences in social status.
7. Educational differences.
8. Attitude toward having children.
9. Age and age differences.

It will be noted that this group has moved the area of sexual interests from third to fourth place in rating of importance, and placed a great deal more emphasis upon the differences that might exist in social status. Might it not be

that this older group of counselors, who may have grown families of their own as well as possibly enjoying a higher social status in terms of years of ministry and higher salaried positions, would attach greater significance to social position.

The group under forty made only a slight change in order:

1. Religious differences.
2. Personality factors.
3. Sexual matters.
4. Economic areas of concern.
5. Length of acquaintance.
6. Educational differences.
7. Differences in social status.
8. Age and age differences.
9. Attitude toward having children.

The one notable change here is again the moving up of the matter of social status, which might well mean that the counselors, who did not supply their ages, were the ones who placed this question in the spot of lesser importance.

Speaking in terms of the counselors rating of the above factors as relating to his value concepts of marriage, the differing values of the two groups are made more clear on a percentage basis.

Twenty-eight percent of the counselors over forty placed the religious consideration in first place compared with 40.62% of the younger group. In the total of the first three positions 84% of the older group put this matter of religious differences as did 71.87% of those under forty.

In considering the total personality of the individuals as the important value in marriage, 32% of the upper age group and 31.25% of the other group placed this matter first, and

64% of the forty-plus group and 59.37% of the lower ages put this value in the top three places.

In terms of the biological values, we do not find such a significant difference between the two groups as might have been inferred from the change in the standings listed above. The over-forty group appeared to measure their idea of the biological values in marriage as somewhat lower in importance than the younger group tended to place it, with 4% of them putting it in first place and 56% placing it within the top four spots. The younger counselors in the same order had a score of 3.12% and 62.4%.

CHAPTER V

Expressing the Counselor's Needs

In Chapter II brief mention was made of some of the danger areas in counseling, including the expression of the emotional needs of the counselor. In the present chapter some of the dangers will be explored more fully in general and then a glance at the questionnaires to see if our clergy counselors recognize any such needs in their counseling and, if so, what they might be.

Bowman had this to say: "The counselor should have no vicarious experience in counseling. For example, he should be able to discuss sexual problems or genital anatomy with a student (client) of the opposite sex with no emotional response whatever, either overt or covert. To the degree which a counselor derives vicarious experience from counseling, he is unfit for counseling."¹

We have already had something to say of this picture of the ideal in counseling. We also did note in Chapter II that Carl Rogers, in mention of the insight required of the counselor into his own emotional pattern, said that the counselor had to realize that there were clients or types of problems

¹Henry Bowman, "The Teacher as Counselor in Marriage Education," Marriage and Family Living, IX, No. 1, p. 5.

which he would be unable to treat effectively because of his own peculiar emotional slant. (See page 18.)

There is in fact "The fear that a counselor will not . . . meet the ideal conditions Such a fear is still sometimes justified in spite of the presence of diplomas, degrees and evidences of experience. Doctors and ministers and vocational counselors and all the rest of us have our own professional dated emotions."²

Probably most of us have known the type of minister to whom Dean Sperry refers when he says, "Some ministers enjoy this intermeddling . . ." (if asked by the doctor to inform a girl of the presence of venereal disease in the man she is about to marry).³ Such enjoyment of intermeddling is an expression of the emotional needs of those particular ministers.

Emotional needs sometimes take the form of the counselor's desire to compensate for his own frustrations, the desire to delve into the mysterious living areas of those in another social class, the desire for power, or the desire to realize through someone else the ambitions which he lost sight of, in much the same fashion as many a father receives glory in the accomplishments of his son where he himself had failed.

This variance from the ideal is not to be considered

²Seward Hiltner, Self Understanding (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 204.

³Willard Sperry, The Ethical Basis of Medical Practice (London: Cassell & Co., Ltd., 1951), p. 123.

as related to the ministerial counselor alone nor to the counselor with a dearth of experience, although it would seem that, in long term counseling experience, many of the emotional needs peculiar to a counselor would be faced and resolved.

Robert Lindner, a trained and practicing psychoanalyst, tells of a dramatic brush he had with himself in the realm of his own emotional needs. He relates it in his story of Kirk which he called "The Jet-propelled Couch."⁴ Kirk was lost in a fantasy which he had built over the years with much effort. Dr. Lindner had worked with the patient for some time with little sign of progress. In a moment of inspiration it occurred to the doctor "that in order to separate Kirk from his madness it was necessary for me to enter his fantasy and, from that position, to pry him loose from the psychosis."⁵ Lindner explains that this is not a new technique, but had been used many times in the past. He continued by explaining some of his own needs in his work, stimulated as he thought by the confinement to the job and the satiation produced by the incessant exposure to the emotions of others. Among his needs "there has to be mentioned my fondness for fantasy, my taste for science fiction, and certain temperamental qualities that contribute to the making of my personality. . . . Kirk's

⁴Robert Lindner, The Fifty Minute Hour (Rinehart & Co., 1954; Bantam edition, 1956), pp. 156 ff.

⁵Ibid., p. 189.

fantasy," he continues, "presented . . . the realization of my dearest wish: the wish to have sufficient time to know, to do, and to be all the wonderful things denied me and all men by temporal limitations. . . . My life does not provide sufficient scope for the satisfaction of this . . . but the intricate fabrication woven by my patient did."⁶

Here is a classic example of the counselor trying to compensate for his own frustrations in the experience of his client. Falling short of perfection as we all do, sometimes it is difficult to keep free of even the most obvious of errors. Lindner put it in this fashion: "We all of us possess areas of lessened resistance, and somewhere on the psychic armor of the strongest there is a vulnerable place."⁷

Lindner may have been aware of his own emotional needs but felt that he had divorced them from his professional self. The revelation of the weakness of his psychic armor might have come as a shock to him, particularly because it was found in the center of his professional service. He says he fell prey to "the mechanism of self-deception," and in the end had to admit that, "I, the therapist, became quite involved in the psychosis of my patient and for a time and to some degree shared his obsession."

⁶Ibid., pp. 195 ff.

⁷Ibid., p. 199.

⁸Ibid., p. 198.

Now the dangers of the pre-marital counselor may not be as intriguing nor be expressed in such dramatic fashion as the above, but the risks are still there. There is the danger that the counselor will find himself reacting to the problems or successes of the client in terms of his own life experience. In this way the counselor may be wooed in fantasy away from the possibility of being the greatest help to the client.

More obvious and common a danger is that of providing too strong support for the client so that he cannot solve his own problem, or on the other hand the counselor cannot resolve the relationship of dependency. How to guard against these and other dangers have been the core of thinking expressed at length in many books. We do not have the room here except to mention the thought that the needs of the counselor are the same as those of any other man, but somehow and in a very large degree these emotional needs should be kept apart from his professional endeavor. That does not mean that the counselor should be a cold unresponsive being, but it does mean that the emotional needs of the counselor should not be permitted to interfere with his relationship with the client. His true emotional needs should be filled in his family and social activities, his fancied needs should be provided in his recreational periods when he can read detective stories or science-fiction, for example, if he wishes.

It was with the above thinking in mind that the third part of the questionnaire was designed. The question was

asked pointedly if the counselors were aware of their emotional needs making themselves known in counseling. It was then asked how these needs made themselves known and, finally, in what areas these needs were usually noted.

Of the seventy questionnaires returned, sixty-nine of them gave answers to at least one of the questions in this part, and many of them made essay answers in expressing their opinions more fully.

In answer to the first question as to whether or not they were aware of their emotional needs appearing in counseling, fifty-four of the clergy counselors answered in the affirmative, eight answered negatively while the remaining seven gave qualified answers, such as: "maybe," "sometimes," "not much." In relation to age difference, three of the over-forty group put their answer in the negative, while four of the younger group did so. 76% of the counselors in the older bracket gave an affirmative answer and 84% of the under-forty clergymen.

The large numbers of these counselors who state that they are aware of their emotional needs appearing in the counseling process would indicate that, although the ideal is that the emotional needs should be met outside the counseling area, such an ideal may not be that which is usually reached in the actual life scene.

We cannot assume that all of these counselors had an experience similar to that of Lindner, in order for them to be-

come aware of this expression of their need. It would then appear that this group of sixty-nine clergymen counselors have a great deal of insight similar to that suggested as necessary by Carl Rogers. Thus the counselor is aware of certain problem areas where, because of his own emotional involvement, he can be of little help.

How are these clergymen made aware of these emotional needs expressing themselves in counseling? There must be some cues for them to read.

To answer this question, the clergymen were given a list of possibilities to check as well as a request for them to present any other thoughts which they had.

One of them stated that he became aware of his own emotional needs in counseling through "facing hard reality," which may indicate an experience similar to that of Lindner. A second answer suggested that the counselor became aware of his need through "identification with clients' problems."

Two other answers were akin to each other. One stated that he felt a "necessity to solve every problem," and the other was, "tempted to solve the problem for the client." This may be insight on the counselor's part, for in both cases there may be a need or desire to gain prestige in the eyes of the client.

In many counseling source books, it is pointed out that the relationship between counselor and counselee is a unique one. The counselor should face the relationship in an objec-

tive manner, but at the same time have a sincere appreciation of the client as a person. The relationship itself can create its own problems. Sometimes needs are revealed here.

Three of the counselors saw cues to their needs in their lack of sympathy with the client, and one of them noted his own "gruff attitude." They may see here a defensive measure to protect themselves from the client who demands so much, who expects the relationship to be more partial, who thinks the function of the counselor is to take the problem as his own, who sees in the clergyman a substitute parent who will solve his pre-marital problems, without the authoritarian attitude of a parent.

Another pointed out that he found indignation asserting itself when "injustice" was expressed in the counseling situation. His need also may relate to the counseling situation in that he feels the lack of a permissive attitude, one of the qualities almost universally suggested for the counseling atmosphere.

Empathy is suggested as one of the qualities which a counselor should have in dealing with a client. If, in a pre-marital counseling situation, a young couple face the problem of whether to marry over the objection of some of the parents involved, then it is held that the counselor should "feel in" with the young people, should put himself in their place, and thus be able to gain an appreciation of their situation.

There are dangers here too. Trying to solve the problem

as though the counselor was actually in that situation himself is one of the dangers. Sometimes a counselor will be lead into a trap, a what-would-you-do-if-you-were-I request. This poses an impossible assumption that the counselor, by empathy, has become identical with the troubled client. If he tries to comply with the request and the client feels the solution suggested is not a good one and actually the only suggestion he is ready to accept is the one he has in his own mind at the moment, then the client-counselor relationship is injured. If, coincidentally, the counselor should suggest "the acceptable," then he is also accepting the blame in the event of failure.

Another danger in empathy is the possibility of the counselor's being led into the client's role in fantasy in order to receive satisfactions which are denied the counselor in actual life. This substitutive source of satisfaction may put the counselor so out of touch with the real problems of the counselee that his ministry will be most ineffective.

Forty-two of our counselors mentioned the matter of empathy as a factor in expressing their emotional concern. Nineteen, or 73%, of the over-forty group, included this. There were seventeen, or 51%, of the under-forty counselors who thought their needs were involved in the matter of empathy. There were six counselors who mentioned this in the group which did not report their age.

Voyeurism has been defined as "peeping-tomism." It has

appeared in counseling in different guises; the polite questioning to find out how life is lived "on the other side of the tracks"; the direct questions, sometimes camouflaged, pointed at the level of personal experience; the delving into the inner recesses of the client's life; the prying into situations of grief, tragedy, "enjoying" a closer glimpse and thus "heroically" removing the very element of true tragedy.

Voyeurism can be found expressed in the day by day level of human relations, in the chattering of the neighborhood gossip, in curiosity toward a differing expression of religious faith and belief, by social workers in dealing with those of other nationalities or races, by visitors in foreign countries, and by the pre-marital counselor who may be interested in the latest dating fads, the intimacies of the engagement period, plans for birth control practice in marriage.

Some of these expressions of inquisitiveness are easily recognized as having no true place in a counseling situation, others are closer to the line of acceptance. Sometimes, the area of acceptability is hard to determine.

Twenty-two of the counselors thought that their needs were made known in counseling situations by the asking of questions which they felt necessary to justify. Rationalization is often employed by the counselor as he tries to convince himself of the propriety and need of certain questions. There were ten counselors in each age group who marked this, so that there was no significant difference percentage-wise

between them.

In the counseling relationship we have a face-to-face contact which may fill a need which the counselor shares with all men in general--to avoid isolation or physical loneliness. Most counselors will accept the fulfillment of this need and still remain aware of the potential dangers.

Some authorities suggest that this need should never be expressed in physical contact, others state that where it may be indicated as wise that the reassuring touch may be employed in the event a client becomes very disturbed. At any rate, where a client is seen reaching out for affection or a feeling of "closeness," the counselor should refuse to respond only after consideration of the effect of the refusal, and he should respond to the appeal only after consideration of the danger of expressing his own needs at the ultimate expense of the client.

One of our counselors said, "Nor can I see any necessity of overt comforting of a person who finds tears an unavoidable release." Apparently most of the other counselors agreed with him, because only three of them noted this as a way in which their needs were made known.

It would appear that the counselors who returned the questionnaire have recognized their needs being expressed in the pre-marital counseling situation, and they have an awareness of the form in which these needs express themselves. Finally, we are interested in the areas in which the counselors

found these needs expressed in their experience in pre-marital counseling.

Four of the counselors made statements to the effect that the area where their emotional need was usually noted was in their "need" to help others in general, or, in one case, in helping others in the specific task of choosing a mate and planning for marriage. There may be psychological reasons why some people "have to" help others and this certainly might apply to doctors, nurses, and hospital aids as well as to the pastor in a pre-marital, or other, counseling situation.

One of the counselors states: "Far too many counselors seek to overcome their own frustration by helping other people"

Thirty-two of the counselors suggested areas where their needs were usually noted that were somewhat related. These were in the area of "personal problems" and "comparable life situations" and "personal family situations," where the problems presented by the client were similar to personal problems faced by the counselor. The dangers in such situations have been discussed above.

Of the thirty-two mentioned, sixteen, or 48%, of the under-forty group and fourteen, or 53%, of the over-forty group expressed this point of view. Again there is no significant difference between the two groups.

Thirteen times the counselors mentioned their own need for recognition as an area where their needs appeared in counseling.

Erickson noted this element of "ego involvement": "The counselor also has a degree of 'ego involvement' in the interview. He wants to look good, too. As a result, he may carry on many activities that are satisfying to him but that may actually be a disadvantage to the client."⁹

One counselor mentioned a need for being recognized in his "'paternal' or 'superior' status."

Fromm-Reichmann thought that this attitude might be the expression of the feeling of insecurity on the part of the counselor, and that particularly the young counselor "might feel called upon to hide his insecurity by displaying professional pompousness."¹⁰

Incidentally, the counselor identifying the need for recognition as quoted above was in our lower age group--aged thirty-six. There were five others in the same age group who also identified this area as meaningful to them in the meeting of their needs, for a figure of 18%.

In the over-forty group, there were only two, somewhat under 8%. The other five did not give their age.

Others of our counselors reported their needs reflected in the realm of sex. Ten of them saw this as an area in which their own emotional needs were noted. Five of these were in

⁹Clifford Eric Erickson, The Counseling Interview (New York, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), p. 39.

¹⁰Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, Principles of Intensive Psychotherapy (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1950), p. 13.

the younger group, three in the above-forty and two among those who did not give their age. It seems significant that 14% of the counselors who replied in this part of our study indicated sexual areas as playing a part. The difference between the age groups is too small to have significance.

Four counselors recognized their need for "adventure"--to experience vicariously the problems, satisfactions, experiences presented by the client. Three of these counselors were in the over-forty group, the other did not report his age. Due to the small number mentioning this item, it would be "forced" to draw any conclusion, but one wonders if this might not be an accurate reflection of what would be found in a much larger sample.

Our total study has been on too small a scale to draw conclusions for counseling or counselors as a whole, but it would appear that, within the limits of this paper, we have seen a group of counselors who have recognized the areas and the dangers of their emotional needs finding expression within the realm of their pre-marital counseling relationships. "The counselor frankly recognizes that he becomes to some extent emotionally involved in this relationship. He does not pretend to be superhuman and above the possibility of such involvement."¹¹

¹¹Carl B. Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1942), p. 87.

Still aware of his own failure, the counselor is constantly fighting within himself to disprove that "Much of our human behavior . . . is aimed at satisfying our own needs, emotional and otherwise, not the needs of others."¹²

¹²Joseph Fletcher, Morals and Medicine (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1954), p. 51.

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